Safeguarding of India's vast coast line

631. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what effective steps Government has adopted to adequately safeguard our vast oceans from the growing cases of perpetration of terrorism, gun-running, piracy and robbery which are now well organized and well-funded transnational crime syndicates;

(b) whether a co-operative venture of littoral states to tackle such threats like terrorism at sea and environmental disasters, etc. could be a beginning towards finding a reliable mechanism as a long-term solution; and

(c) if so, the initiative being taken to achieve this objective?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Government has initiated several measures to strengthen its Coastal Security and surveillance to protect our coastline from infiltration of terrorists and others. Further joint exercises of Navy and Coast Guard in conjunction with marine police, Customs and others is taking place regularly.

Government recognizes the important role of cooperation with other littoral states in tackling such threats. India is participating in various fora of regional cooperation including Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. Further coordinated patrolling is also carried out with certain navies including holding of Milan exercise with a large number of neighbouring navies.

Meeting of top commanders of three armed forces

632. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether recently a meeting of top commanders of three armed forces was held to find out measures to fill up 35,227 vacancies of officers in Army, improve medical facilities in defence hospitals, remove complications in defence procurement polices and modernize armed forces and to promote welfare of soldiers;

(b) if so, the details of the conclusion derived therein; and

(c) the action plan of the Government on the suggestions made in above said meeting?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) The Combined Commanders' Conference of the three services was held on 20th October, 2009, the minutes of which have yet to be received by the Government.

Decline in recruitment of women in defence

†633. SHRI KAPTAN SINGH SOLANKI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether it is a fact that number of women has declined in defence recruitments during last many years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has taken any steps in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) There is no overall decline in recruitment of women officers in the Defence Services. Measures to improve the intake of officers, including women, in the Defence Services is a continuous process.

Armed Forces Tribunal

634. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court observed 27 years ago the lacunae in justice delivery system for the service personnel ridden with archaic provisions owing to the colonial legacy;

(b) whether the much delayed Armed Forces Tribunal has now been put in place for speedier and transparent dispensation of justice for the service personnel; and

(c) how many courts will be set up under the AFT and the locations thereof including the strength of both judicial and administrative members functioning under the Tribunals?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) The Supreme Court had held in 1982, that the absence of even one appeal with power to review evidence, legal formulation, conclusion and adequacy or other wise of punishment in the laws relating to the armed forces was a distressing and glaring lacuna and urged the Government to take steps to provide for at least one judicial review in service matters.

The Armed Forces Tribunal has been set up for the adjudication or trial of disputes and complaints with respect to the service matters and also to provide for appeals arising out of verdicts of the Courts Martial in respect of personnel of the Armed Forces.

The Armed Forces Tribunal has a sanctioned strength of a Chairperson, fourteen Judicial Members and fifteen Administrative Members. At present, Chairperson, nine Judicial Members and fifteen Administrative Members are in position. Principal Bench of the AFT is located at Delhi. It has three courts. It has been decided to establish Regional Benches at Chandigarh, Lucknow, Jaipur, Mumbai, Kolkata, Guwahati, Chennai and Kochi; while the Regional Benches at Lucknow and Chandigarh will have three courts each, all other Regional Benches will have one court each.

Obsolete hand grenades used by soldiers guarding our border

635. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state: